

printing of a second edition of this tale of
priestly intrigue
in public and private life.¹

But Zola's eyes were still turned towards
the stage,
partly because he desired to apply certain
theories to play-
writing, and partly because he knew that the
successful
dramatist advanced far more rapidly than the
successful
novelist along the path to fortune. Thus,
having finished
his three-act comedy, "Les He'ritiers
Eabourdin,"² in which
the gruesome was mingled with the farcical, he
offered it to
the Palais Eoyal Theatre. But the manager of
that house
only cared for amusing plays free from all
lugubrious taint,
his chief author being Labiche, whose name
was synony-
mous with unadulterated merriment ; so Zola
soon carried his
manuscript to M. Montigny of the Gymnase.
Writing on
July 23, 1874, to his friend and publisher, M.
Charpentier, he
gave the following account of the issue of his
endeavours : —

"My negotiations with Montigny have
fallen through. He
handed me back my manuscript in the
most charming manner,
vowing that he had a keen desire to
stage a play of mine. He
even gave me my *entrees* to the Gymnase,
by way of consolation,
no doubt. Briefly, my play frightened him,
but it is certain that
he long hesitated about it, and that the
doors of his theatre •will
be open to me if I only undertake ' to be
good.³ As soon as my
manuscript was returned to me I was
eager to carry it elsewhere.

Decidedly, it is a disease ; one wants to be
* played,' whatever
may be the chances. The only thing left
for me to do was to
knock at the door of the Theltre de
Cluny. I went there.
And, yesterday, "Weinschenk [the
manager] accepted my play.
It will pass before Flaubert's,⁸ about the
middle of September,

La ConquSte de Plassans," 1st and 2d editions : Paris,
Charpentier,
1874, 18mo, 406 pages ; 3d edition, 1876, 402 pages ;
thirty-fourth thou-
sand on sale in 1903.
1 "

⁸ This was a play called " Le Sexe Faible," which Flaubert
had agreed to